

**SUBMISSION**  
**From**  
**Western Central Districts Road Carriers**

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- 1.0 This submission represents the interests of the collective Western Central Districts Road Carriers. That comprises approximately 200 business owners operating around 4,500 heavy vehicles. Western Central Districts road carriers have been heavily involved in, and given useful advice to, many roading projects especially the Mt Messenger, and Mt Messenger to North Awakino business case and past experience demonstrates the acute affinity and understanding we have for the related issues and benefits.
- 1.1 Before commencing this submission it is right to recognise other stakeholders and parties affected by the very important decision regarding the mount Messenger upgrade. Most particularly Iwi and tangata whenua who have the road freight transport industry's deepest respect and support. Equally important are Taranaki rate payers, travellers using the south western route to enter and leave the region, the national economy, consumers and road safety proponents.
- 1.2 The government has set a number of desirable goals via the safer journeys plans that the Mount Messenger roading project will deliver on. Reduced travel time, secure and dependable route infrastructure and much improved road safety are among the main important goals.
- 1.3 It has long been recognised that Mt Messenger is not fit for purpose<sup>1</sup>. This is especially relevant given there is no viable alternative route suitable for heavy vehicles. Without those heavy vehicle movements local and national business and more importantly society suffers.
- 1.4 The current route has a very steep gradient, very tight corners and large tracts of shadowed pavement. Those conditions while problematic in

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<sup>1</sup> As far back as 1920 discussions have been held on improving the route.

reasonably good conditions make the route often un-navigable in less conducive conditions. Too often and with consistent regularity heavy vehicles are stuck on the Mt due to insufficient tractability.

- 1.5 The greatest issue is that the route is unavoidably and regularly closed due to slips and crashes. An improved route will significantly improve those statistics.

## 2.0 **No Short Detour**

The shortest bypass to access the South West from Taranaki is via Whanganui. The additional travel distance one way is approximately 350km. That equates to an additional \$1030 the customer must pay. That additional distance also adds to travel time and disrupts deliveries. To compensate approximately 400 additional heavy vehicle movements are required per day. The additional drive distance also creates truck driver fatigue implications. A new route can avoid these undesirable outcomes.

- 2.1 The advent of High Productivity Motor Vehicles has created a variety of heavy vehicle tracking issues that Government is currently attempting to resolve. While we mention those vehicles, it should also be recognised that even standard heavy motor vehicle combination suffer road fit issues on the current route. That will always be the case. There was always going to be an imbalance between attempting to fit modern, efficient heavy vehicles on nearly 90 year old infrastructure.
- 2.2 That infrastructure must be modernised to match.
- 2.3 The current route also complicates transport of over-dimension loads into and out of the region. The loads are essential for supporting the economic imperatives the Taranaki region is known for.

### **3.0 Environmental Benefit:**

Following our earlier comments about new project design, especially grade easement and straighter alignments, the project will reduce many of the environmental contamination issues the old route induces.

- 3.1 Vehicle noise emissions will be reduced as heavy vehicles will not be under full engine loading. Emissions and fuel consumption will similarly be significantly reduced.
- 3.2 Building a route with gentler slope, reduced number of corners and easing of corner angles will improve tractability and gradeability which has a long term benefit in terms of pavement and substrate longevity.

### **Conclusion:**

The Taranaki and adjoining districts are being presented with an opportunity to address long standing economic and environmental issues by improving the current south western access route.

There is significant community support for this project. Taranaki people and road users travelling into the region desire it. Road users should be provided a reliable route that delivers improved safety and incorporates total route security.

The route is strategically important in terms of freight connection and tourism.

Western Central Districts Road Carriers suggest consent be given to commence this vitally important project.